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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 12 NOUAKCHOTT 000252

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/17/2013
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KMCA](#) [MR](#)
SUBJECT: MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT CABINET RESHUFFLE -- RETURN
OF THE POLITICIANS

Classified By: Ambassador Mark M. Boulware for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

Summary and Comment

1. (C) One year into his administration, President Abdallahi is changing his team. The change was long anticipated -- a change from a government that reflected the necessary political compromises of the immediate post-election to a government that takes greater account of political, ethnic and regional diversity. The significant trend in the new Prime Minister announced May 11 and new Cabinet of May 14 is the departure of intelligent but inexperienced technocrats and the arrival of more politically savvy ministers with experience in past Mauritanian governments. The new government does not have quite the youthful shine of the last one; however, it brings in people better able to implement policy than the previous "ideas" ministers. The resurrection of past ministers from previous undemocratic regimes raises questions of their commitment to the tenets of transparency and democracy espoused by the President. The changes are not altogether well received outside of Government circles with thoughtful critics seeing the personality mix as a potential step backward in Mauritania's democratic transformation. Leader of the opposition Ahmed Ould Daddah told the Ambassador he saw the new Cabinet as overall better than the last but he raised concerns over some of the individual Ministers -- particularly the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Daddah said, "Mauritania must have the highest per-capita number of former ministers in the world," suggesting that in the search for ministers with strong practical experience, it should be possible to find some whose history is not tainted.

A Mauritanian governor of Afro-Mauritanian origin pulled the Ambassador aside to say he saw the change of ministers as a "civilian coup" and warned that "we" (i.e. Afro-Mauritanians) will not accept a return of the cronyism and ethnic favoritism of the past. In both the case of Daddah and the governor, the concerns are primarily based on a belief that those involved in past poor governance will be unable to change now -- a fear of future bad action without being able to point to anything being done wrong at present. There is a common sense that the new government will be better than the past in implementing President Abdallahi's ambitious political, social, economic and security agenda. And there is agreement that there is likely to be little change in government policy, merely better application of the previously stated policies. With the heavy security and development relationship the U.S. is evolving with Mauritania, we need to watch developments closely. A new boost of energy in implementing the ambitious national agenda should be welcome and supported. We need to be frank in our exchanges with the government and vigilant for any signs of backsliding to impress upon the Government that our growing support is founded on the quality of Mauritania's democratic transformation.

12. (U) By order of precedence:

Prime Minister Yahya Ould Ahmed El Waghef

The Cabinet

Minister of Justice

-- Yahya Ould Sid'El Moustaph

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

-- Cheikh El Avia Ould Mohamed Khouna

Minister of National Defense

-- Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Mohamed Lemine

Minister of Interior

-- Mohamed Yehdih Ould Moctar El Hacen

Minister of Economy and Finance

-- Abderrahmane Ould Hama Vezaz

Minister of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Fight
Against Illiteracy

-- Nebghouha Mint Haba

Minister of Higher Education

-- Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Seydi

Minister of Islamic Affairs and Religious Education

-- Dahane Ould Ahmed Mahmoud

Minister of Employment, Integration, and Professional Training

-- Habib Ould Hemdeit

Minister of Health

-- Mohamed Ould Mohamed El Hafedh Ould Khilil

Minister of Petroleum and Mines

-- Kane Mustapha

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Minister of Fisheries

-- Assane Soumane

Minister of Commerce and Industry

-- Salma Mint Tegueddi

Minister of Decentralization and Territorial Administration

-- Yahya Ould Kebd

Minister of Agriculture and Livestock

-- Correra Issagha

Minister of Equipment, Urban Affairs, and Housing

-- Mohamed Ould Bilal

Minister of Transportation

-- Bebaha Ould Ahmed Youra

Minister of Hydrology and Energy

-- Mohamed Ould R'zeizim

Minister of Culture and Communication

-- Mohamed Ould Amar

Minister of Public Administration and Administrative
Modernization

-- Moustapha Ould Hamoud

Minister for Relations with Parliament and Civil Society

-- Sidney Sokhona

Minister of Women, Children and Family Affairs

-- Fatimetou Mint Khattri

Minister for Youth and Sports

-- Mohamed Ould Borbosse

Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister for Environment

-- Dahmoud Ould Merzoug

Minister Delegate to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and
Cooperation for Arab Maghreb Affairs

-- Mohamed Lemine Ould Minister Secretary General of the

Government Ba Abdoulaye Mamadou

State Secretary of the Ministry of Economy and Finance for
Budget

-- Sid'Ahmed Ould Rayes

State Secretary for Mauritanians Abroad

-- Hohamed Ould Mohamedou

State Secretary for Telecommunications and Informatics

-- Abdallahi Ould Ely Ould Benane

Minister Secretary General of the Republic

-- Bodjiel Ould Houmeid

Minister Counselor to the President

-- Ba Boubakar

Non-Cabinet Members

Chief of Staff of the Presidency

-- Cheyakh Ould Ely

General Delegate for Promotion of Private Investment

-- Sidi Mohamed Ould Amajar

Running The Numbers

13. (U) Political diversity: The new cabinet draws from a broader political base than the previous government with several posts going to opposition parties. The recently formed "party of the majority" (National Party for Democracy and Development) headed by Prime Minister Wagef takes the majority of the 31 cabinet positions (20) with APP taking 3, Q UFP 3, RNRD 2, PRDR 1, Vadhila 1, and Alternative 1.

Ethnic Diversity: Non-White Moors increase by two their role in the cabinet which now includes 13% Black Moors and 19% Afro-Mauritanians (still well below their presence in the population). The Cabinet includes 4 Black Moors, 4 Pulaars, and 2 Soninke. The Wolof lose the single seat they previously held.

Gender Diversity: Women retain the three cabinet seats previously held with a marginal increase in power through the appointment of a female Minister of Commerce and Industry (at the cost of the Minister Delegate of Environment).

Regional Diversity: With an eye towards more regional equities, nearly all regions get a share of the pie. The breakdown is as follows:

5 Ministers: Tagant and Assaba Regions
4 Ministers: Adrar, Trarza, Hodh Echarghi Regions
3 Ministers: Gorgol, Brakhna, Regions
2 Ministers: Hodh El Gharbi, Guidimakha Regions
1 Minister: Inchiri, Nouadhibou Regions
0 Ministers: Tiris-Zemmour

Biographic Information

14. (SBU) Prime Minister Yahya Ould Ahmed El Waghef

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Status: Replaces Zein Ould Zeidane

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Turkuz tribe, born 1960 in the Tagant region. Married. Engineering degree from Morocco.

Political Affiliation: President of PNDD

Previous Positions: Minister Secretary General of the Republic 2007 - 2008. Advisor to Minister of Finance 2007. Director General of Air Mauritanie 2005 - 2006. Secretary General Ministry of Hydrology and Energy 2004 - 2005. Director of Banc d'Arguin National Park 2003 - 2004.

Languages: Arabic, French and limited English.

(C) Comments: Waghef is President Abdallahi's political right hand man. He has consolidated his image as a strong policy administrator in leading the new Government's efforts to repatriate refugees from Senegal and Mali and the Government's emergency food security program. Politically, he took the lead in creating the new National Party for Democracy and Development that pulled together President Abdallahi's diverse political coalition into a traditional political party.

15. (SBU) Minister of Justice Yahya Ould Sid'El Moustaph

Status: New minister replacing Limam Ould Teguedi

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Tajakanet tribe, born 1965 in the Assaba region. Married. Koranic studies in Mauritania followed by university studies in Administration in Morocco.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Minister of Islamic Affairs 2005 - 2007. Multiple posts as governor (Wali) and prefect (Hakim). Radio journalist pre-1983.

Languages: Arabic only

(C) Comments: First minister from the Vall transition authorities to serve in the Abdallahi government. Well regarded as the Minister of Islamic Affairs. Press reports suggest he will be well placed to manage high-level terrorism cases against Islamic extremists.

16. (SBU) Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Cheikh El Avia Ould Mohamed Khouna

Status: New minister replacing Saleck Ould Mohamed Lemine

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Talaba tribe, born 1956 in the Hodh Echarghi region. Married. Degree in agronomy from Morocco.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Twice Prime Minister and once Foreign Minister in the Taya government.

Languages: Arabic and French

(C) Comments: Khouna is closely associated with Mauritania's decision to establish relations with Israel with corresponding enmity from many Mauritaniens. Very well versed in diplomatic activities. As Prime Minister in 2003 had many Salafists arrested for possible terrorist linkages but was sacked by Taya over concerns he might have been involved in a coup attempt (observers do not believe he was involved but was mistrusted because he came from the same region as the coup plotters). Widely accused of past corruption.

17. (SBU) Minister of National Defense Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Mohamed Lemine

Status: Retains position.

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Deyboussat tribe, born 1952 in Assaba region. Married. Management and Economy degree from Egypt.

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Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Minister of National Defense 2007 - 2008. Director of Ecole Nationale d'Administration 1986 - 2007.

Languages: Arabic only

(C) Comments: Widely considered one of the least effective ministers. Observers believe President Abdallahi intentionally does not want a strong Minister of Defense to lessen coup risks. Senior government officials have told Mission to by-pass the Minister of Defense on security-related discussions.

¶8. (SBU) Minister of Interior Mohamed Yehdhih Ould Moctar El Hacen

Status: Replaces Yall Zakaria

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Oulad Bousda'a tribe, born 1948 from Inchiri region. Married, University studies in Tunisia.

Political Affiliation: Alternative

Previous Positions: Minister Secretary General for two weeks under President Taya, Minister of Finance, Deputy Director of Central Bank, executive in several commercial banks.

Languages: Arabic, French and English

(C) Comments: Close campaign collaborator with President Abdallahi, El Hacen is a cousin of Presidential Personal Chief of Staff General Aziz and is expected to be a close collaborator with Aziz in the war on terrorism. El Hacen led efforts for reformist politicians in 2003 and was elected to the National Assembly and drawing the ire of President Taya. Taya named El Hacen Minister Secretary General of the Presidency -- making him ineligible to be a deputy -- and promptly dismissed him 15 days later.

¶9. (SBU) Minister of Economy and Finance Abderrahmane Ould Hamma Vezaz

Status: Retains position with new State Secretary for Budget created to strengthen position.

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Ehl Haj tribe, born 1956 from the Tagant region. Married. Degrees in finance from Morocco and MBA from France.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Minister of Economy and Finance 2007 -
¶2008. Executive Director of Credit Office 2006 - 2007,
overseas positions with BADEA and Government Niger 1998 -
¶2006. Minister of Rural Development 1998.

Languages: Arabic, French, and English

Comments: The government's pre-eminent technocrat credited for building budget discipline and transparency, Vezaz is a bit of a "darling" with the donor community. Led successful Paris Club consultations winning government much needed development financing.

¶10. (SBU) Minister of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Fight Against Illiteracy Nebghouha Mint Haba

Status: Retains position but loses responsibility for higher education which is established as a new ministry.

Identifying Data: Female, White Moor of the Idawaaly tribe, born 1966 from the Adrar region. Married. Degrees in economics from France and Mauritania.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Minister of Education 2007 - 2008, technical positions in Ministry of Education and Economy 1998 - 2004.

Languages: Arabic, French and limited English.

Comments: Survived several policy slips in first term including efforts to extend school day (drawing ire of teachers who typically have private tutoring positions after school). Key contact on MCC program.

¶11. (SBU) Minister of Higher Education Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Seydi

Status: New minister in newly created ministry.

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Deyboussat tribe, born 1965 in the Assaba region. Married. Islamic studies in Mauritania and Morocco.

Political Affiliation: Islamic RNDR

Previous Positions: Independent Deputy in the National Assembly. Former professor of Islamic law. Leader in teachers union. Former Journalist

Languages: Arabic and French.

(C) Comments: A popular leader in the newly established Islamic party. Will likely support the fundamentalist efforts of Islamic students at the University. Seydi was imprisoned and tortured in 1991 for negative journalistic reporting against the expulsion of Afro-Mauritanians (see 1991 NOUAKCHOTT 933).

¶12. (SBU) Minister of Islamic Affairs and Religious Education Dahane Ould Ahmed Mahmoud

Status: Replaces Ahmed Vall Ould Salah

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Laghlal tribe, born 1952 from the Adrar region. Married. High school and university studies in France.

Political Affiliation: Al Vadhila Islamic Party

Previous Positions: Naval Captain, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Information. Representative of the Arab League in Spain and India. Businessman.

Languages: Arabic, French, English, Spanish and limited German and Russian

(C) Comments: While representing an Islamic party, Mahmoud's diplomatic and military background should make for a useful counterpart in anti-extremism efforts within Islamic schools.

¶13. (SBU) Minister of Employment, Integration, and Professional Training Habib Ould Hemdeit

Status: Replaces Cheikh El Kebir Ould Chbih

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Tendgha tribe, born 1961 from the Trarza region. Married. Education degree from Mauritania.

Political Affiliation: RNDR (Islamist)

Previous Positions: Director of the National Library 2004-2007, Advisor to the Minister of Culture 2006.

Languages: French and Arabic

(C) Comments: With the Minister of Higher Education, Hemdeit reflects the interest of Islamic parties to take the lead in youth education. Hemdeit is a long term Islamist activist arrested several times under the Taya government.

¶14. (SBU) Minister of Health Mohamed Ould Mohamed El Hafedh Ould Khilil

Status: Replaces Mohamed Lemine Ould Raghani

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Idawaaly tribe, born 1949 from the Tagant region. Married. Public Administration degree from Mauritania -- high school in Libya and Morocco.

Political Affiliation: UFP (Opposition party)

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Previous Positions: Governor in three different provinces, most recently of the Capital Region of Nouakchott.

Languages: Arabic

(C) Comments: Khlil is seen as an effective manager likely to bring order to a key -- but highly dysfunctional ministry. Senior staffers are concerned that as an Arabic-only speaker with no formal health background, Khlil will have difficulty engaging the many donors in the health sector. The prior Minister was seen as technically very competent but had poor relations with his advisors and was not an effective manager.

15. (SBU) Minister of Petroleum and Mines Kane Mustapha

Status: Replaces Mohamed el Moctar Ould Mohamed el Hacem

Identifying Data: Male Afro-Mauritanian of the Pulaar tribe. Born 1949 from the Gorgol region. Married. Masters in nuclear physics from France.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Deputy in the National Assembly and head of the Committee on Economic Affairs. Previous stints as Minister of Mines and Industry and of Water and Energy. Also ran parastatal electric and telephone companies.

Languages: French

(C) Comments: Will head a key ministry for Mauritania's economic future. Mission reporting from 2003 termed Kane as one of Taya's cleanest and most professional ministers.

16. (SBU) Minister of Fisheries Assane Soumane

Status: Retains position.

Identifying Data: Male. Afro-Mauritanian of the Soninke Tribe. Born 1951 from the Guidimagha region. Married. Mathematics degrees from France.

Political Affiliation: UFP

Previous Positions: Minister of Fisheries. University professor. Financial director and cashier at an oil field support company - Shenker - 2004-2007.

Languages: French, English

Comments: Credited for successful renegotiation of key fisheries agreement with EU.

17. (SBU) Minister of Commerce and Industry Salma Mint Tegueddi

Status: Replaces Sid'Ahmed Ould Rayes

Identifying Data: Female. White Moor of the Lemtouna tribe. YOB unknown from the Gorgol region. Married. Academics unknown.

Political Affiliation: Adil

Previous Positions: Senator

Languages: Unknown

Comments: Leading figure for women's rights.

¶18. (SBU) Minister of Handicraft and Tourism Mohamed Mahmoud
Ould Brahim Khilil

Status: Replaces Ba Madine

Identifying Data: Male. White Moor of the Smacid Tribe (Former
President Taya's clan). YOB unknown from the Adrar region.
Married. Journalism studies in Moscow.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Diplomat -- Ambassador to Jordan 2006,
UNESCO 2005-2006, DCM Moscow 2003-2005. Journalist with state
media.

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Languages: Arabic, French, English and Russian

Comments: None

¶19. (SBU) Minister of Decentralization and Territorial
Administration Yahya Ould Kebd

Status: Retains position.

Identifying Data: Male. White Moor of the Idagajmalla tribe.
Born 1958 from the Brakna region. Married. Doctorate in
Public Administration from France. Other degrees from France
and Senegal.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Minister of Decentralization. Director
of planning for President Abdallahi's campaign. Political
Scientist 2002-2007.

Languages: French and Arabic

Comments: A carry-over technocrat, Yahya is a dynamic speaker
charged with ambitious rural development strategy.

¶20. (SBU) Minister of Agriculture and Livestock Correra
Issagha

Status: Retains position.

Identifying Data: Male. Afro-Mauritanian of the Pulaar tribe.
Born 1942 from the Gorgol region. Married. Doctorate in
Literature from Tunisia with degrees from Mauritania and Cote
d'Ivoire.

Political Affiliation: APP

Previous Positions: Minister of Agriculture. University
professor 1974 - 2004.

Languages: French

Comments: The sole opposition minister in the first cabinet.

¶21. (SBU) Minister of Equipment, Urban Affairs, and Housing
Mohamed Ould Bilal

Status: Retains position.

Identifying Data: Male. Black Moor of the Oulad M'Bareck tribe. Born 1963 from the Trarza region. Married. Engineering degree from Algeria.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Minister of Equipment. Senior professional positions in ministry previously.

Languages: French, Arabic and English

Comments: Carry-over technocrat.

¶22. (SBU) Minister of Transportation Bebaha Ould Ahmed Youra

Status: Replaces Ahmed Ould Mohameden.

Identifying Data: Male. White Moor of the Poulad Deymane tribe. Born 1950 from the Trarza region. Married. University studies unknown.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Director of Port of Nouadhibou since ¶2003. Previously Secretary General in ministries of Water, Commerce and Culture.

Languages: French and Arabic

Comments: None

¶23. (SBU) Minister of Hydrology and Energy Mohamed Ould R'zeizim

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Status: Replaces Oumar Ould Yali.

Identifying Data: Male. White Moor of the Oulad Nasser tribe. Born 1957 from the Hodh Charghi region. Married. Management degree from Tunisia.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Director of national fishing company ¶2007. Governor in several provinces including Nouakchott and Nouadhibou 1994 - 2003.

Languages: French and Arabic

Comments: None

¶24. (SBU) Minister of Culture and Communication Mohamed Ould Amar

Status: Replaces Mohamed Vall Ould Cheikh.

Identifying Data: Male. White Moor of the Messouma tribe. Born 1965 from the Gidimagha region. Married. Masters in Economics from Algeria.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Director of national teachers college since 2003.

Languages: Arabic and French.

Comments: None

¶25. (SBU) Minister of Public Administration and Administrative Modernization Moustapha Ould Hamoud

Status: Replaces Aziz Ould Dahi.

Identifying Data: Male. White Moor of the Idawaaly tribe. Born 1958 from the Tagant region. Married. Management degrees from France.

Previous Positions: Director General of Air Mauritanie 2002 - ¶2005. Management positions in state social security administration.

Languages: Arabic, French and English

Comments: None

¶26. (SBU) Minister for Relations with Parliament and Civil Society Sidney Sokhona

Status: Replaces Mohamed Ould Brihim Khilil

Identifying Data: Male. Afro-Mauritanian of the Soninke tribe. Born 1952 from the Guidimagha region. Married. Cinematography degree from France

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Parliamentarian (Selibaby) 2007. Ambassador to France. Presidential Counselor for Human Rights 1986 - 2000.

Languages: French

(C) Comments: Sokhona (sometimes spelled Sokhna) came to prominence as the human rights spokesperson for the Taya government. Particularly after the human rights abuses of the 1989-1991 period, Sokhona was a frequent contact with U.S. ambassadors and traveled abroad to defend Mauritania's record. Civil society is deeply split on the new Minister. Some see him as a past-apologist for human rights abuses while others see him as an Afro-Mauritanian who did his best to contain the abuses from within the system.

¶27. (SBU) Minister of Women, Children and Family Affairs Fatimetou Mint Khattri

Status: Retains position.

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Identifying Data: Female, White Moor of the Laghlal Tribe, born in 1964 in Hodh Echarghi region. Single. Degrees in Economics from University Nouakchott and Statistics from Moroccan National Institute of Statistics.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions:

Deputy Director for Training and Public Affairs, Ministry of Rural Development (2002-2003)

Languages: Arabic and French. Some English comprehension.

Comments: Occasional Mission contact for MCC Threshold Program for Girls Education Completion Rate Project,

¶28. (SBU) Minister for Youth and Sports Mohamed Ould Borbosse

Status: Replaces Mohamed Ould Ahmed Ould Yarg

Identifying Data: Male, Black Moor of the Oulad Nasser Tribe, born 1961 in the Hodh El Gharbi region. Married. Teaching degree.

Political Affiliation: APP (Arab nationalist and Haratine party)

Previous Positions: Head of the U.S. - Mauritanian Alumni Association until May 2008. President of anti-slavery NGO "SOS-Esclaves" until 2004. French Teacher. Mayor of El Mina 2001-2006.

Languages: French, Arabic, English

(C) Comments: Leading advocate on anti-slavery issues. Close associate of the Mission when he headed the U.S.-Mauritanian alumni association but a temperamental and divisive leader. Former IV grantee.

¶29. (SBU) Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister for Environment Dahmoud Ould Merzoug

Status: Replaces Aicha Mint Sidi Bouna

Identifying Data: Male, Black Moor of the Idawaaly tribe, born 1953 from the Assaba region. Married. Forestry studies in Morocco and advanced degree in France.

Political Affiliation: PRDR

Previous Positions: Director of nature protection (1985-1993) and director of environment (1993 - 1995). Secretary General Ministry of Rural Development 1995 - 1996. Deputy 1996 - ¶2001. 2003 - 2007 sector director for environment within the Ministry.

Languages: Arabic, French, and marginal English

Comments: A proficient technocrat with greater political ties than his well-liked predecessor. Merzoug has had a long and positive relationship with the U.S. Will be a key player in MCC environment project.

¶30. (SBU) Minister Delegate to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation for Arab Maghreb Affairs Mohamed Lemine Ould Nati

Status: Replaces Mohamed el Hafdeh Ould Ismael

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Laghlal tribe, born 1959 in the Adrar region. Married. University studies in Saudi Arabia and Mauritania.

Political Affiliation: APP - Secretary for Culture and Information 2003 to present.

Previous Positions: Secretary General of this ministry 1992 - ¶1997. UTM trade union Secretary General 1989 - 1997. Professor at University Nouakchott 1987 - 2007.

Languages: Arabic, French and English

Comments: Nasserist. This is an increasingly important position with the development of the Arab Maghreb Union and

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resolution of the Western Sahara conflict.

¶31. (SBU) Minister Secretary General of the Government Ba Abdoulaye Mamadou

Status: Replaces Abdallahi Ould Limam Malick

Identifying Data: Male, Afro-Mauritanian of the Pular tribe, born 1958 in Gorgol region. Married. University studies in Morocco and Canada. Lawyer.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Various positions in parastatal companies (oil, fisheries, roads). Advisor to President Taya 2001 - 2003.

Languages: French, Arabic and English

Comments: None.

132. (SBU) State Secretary of the Ministry of Economy and Finance for Budget Sid'Ahmed Ould Rayes

Status: New position for former Minister of Commerce and Industry

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Kounta tribe, born 1964 in the Tagant region. Married. Advanced degrees in administration from France (Ecole Nationale d'Administration Publique), Tunisia and Mauritania.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Minister of Commerce 2007 - 2008. Campaign manager for President Abdallahi in Inchiri region 2006-2007. Technical government position 1993 - 2007.

Languages: Arabic, French and moderate English.

Comments: Rayes is seen as one of the better technocrats in the previous government. While a lower ranking position, his transfer to the budget slot is more important in maintaining donor confidence in Mauritanian budget discipline and transparency.

133. (SBU) State Secretary for Mauritians Abroad Hohamed Ould Mohamedou

Status: New position.

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Mechdhouf tribe, born 1970 in the Hodh Echarghi region. Married. Advanced degree in economics from Mauritania.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Technical positions in Food Security Commission 2000 - 2007. Teaching positions in Algeria.

Languages: Arabic and French.

Comments: This new position will respond to important economic role of remittances from Mauritians abroad who, in 2012, will be able to vote in national elections.

134. (SBU) State Secretary for Telecommunications and Informatics Abdallahi Ould Ely Ould Benane

Status: New position.

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the El Guerre'e tribe, DOB unknown from the Nouadhibou region. Education unknown.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Unknown

Languages: Arabic and French

Comments: None

135. (SBU) Minister Secretary General of the Republic Bodjiel

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Ould Houmeid

Status: Replaces Prime Minister Yahya Ould Ahmed el Waghef

Identifying Data: Male, Black Moor of the Tendgha tribe, born 1953 in the Trarza. Married. University studies at Ecole Nationale d'Administration in France.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Beginning as a union leader in the 1980's entering government in the 1990's with various senior positions including Minister of Commerce, Rural Development, Fisheries, Health, and Finance. Most recently head of national health insurance program.

Languages: Arabic and French.

(C) Comments: This is regarded the third most important civilian position in the government after the President and Prime Minister. 2003 NOUAKCHOTT 625 remarking on Houmeid's dismissal as President Taya's Minister of Finance welcomed the change as one of Taya's three departing ministers "Known for lining their pockets at public expense." His political revival is criticized by many because of his past history of corruption. As a Black Moor, Houmeid may provide momentum to the Government's efforts to address the legacy of slavery; however, in the past he has not been vocal on the issue.

136. (SBU) Minister Counselor to the President Ba Boubakar

Status: New Position

Identifying Data: Male, Afro-Mauritanian of the Pulaar tribe, born 1946 in the Brakna region. Married. Anthropology studies in Senegal and France.

Political Affiliation: UFP

Previous Positions: Consultant for USAID, UNESCO, GTZ and others.

Languages: French and Arabic

Comments: None.

137. (SBU) Chief of Staff of the Presidency Cheyakh Ould Ely

Status: Replaces Sidi Mohamed Ould Amajar who becomes General Director for Promotion of Private Investment.

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Joumane tribe. born 1951 in the Hodh Echarghi region. Married. Engineering degree from Belgium.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Mauritanian Ambassador to Morocco since 12004. Minister of Communication 2001 - 2003 with previous positions in Ministry of Industry. Worked for Arab Industrial Organization 1982 - 1990.

Languages: French, Arabic and limited English.

Comments: None.

138. (SBU) General Delegate for Promotion of Private Investment Sidi Mohamed Ould Amajar

Status: Replaces Mohamed Abdullahi Ould Yaha

Identifying Data: Male, White Moor of the Idawaaly tribe, born 1961 in the Tagant region. Married. Economics degree from France and MBA from Canada.

Political Affiliation: PNDD

Previous Positions: Chief of Staff of the Presidency since 2007. Worked for Islamic Development Bank 2005 - 2007. Economist in Ministry of Planning 1996 - 1998.

Languages: French, Arabic and English.

Comments: A good Mission contact in his previous position, Amajar has expressed interest in working with the U.S. to

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promote private investment.
Boulware